

En-gendered Anxieties.

Lesbian and gay community and gender in Poland

Writing about Poland in the context of sexuality is like attempting to merge water with fire. It is because of a long cultural tradition of a silence enveloping private and personal dimensions of people lives. And taking patriotic duties to the lead. As Jolanta Brach-Czaina put it: "in Polish culture, gender is such hidden, unrecognised value"¹. Similarly, we can note that homosexuality was not only 'unrecognised', but also unformulated, uncategorised. It only happened at the beginning of the 1980s that the first public acknowledgements of homosexuality occurred². Before, there were just the Nation, Fatherland, Sacrifice, Hope and Oppressor. Many academics point the 1989 as the clear-cut date, when 'everything' changed, not only political system. Not questioning the validity of those opinions, one have to also admit that although the social and cultural transformation is significant; still, the Polish mentality and this queer thing called 'Polishness' are remaining the same. They are full of contrasts, national hung-ups and unsatisfied aspirations. One of the most significant features is the question of the place Poland occupies in the cultural legacy of Europe. For centuries, this country – geographically being in the centre of Europe – was accommodating itself to the changing socio-political and economic-geographical positions. And the balance was always between those two great power-constructs, we call today East and West. Conservatism and liberalism. Nationalism and multiculturalism. Religiousness and secularism.

Nowadays, two years after European Union enlargement (the official confirmation of westernisation?), Poland still seems to be unable to find steadiness in some areas of its cultural and social organisation. These are gender and homosexuality. In this text I want to describe briefly how and what did shape contemporary notion on gender in Poland; then I will present Polish lesbian and gay community in the light of liberation struggles. For the practical reasons I have decided to close my research period around 2002/2003. It is mainly because of a significant shift in the mainstream discourses after "Let Them See Us" campaign (I will return to it at the end of the article), what inevitably influences lesbian and gay communities and their politics. The

¹ Jolanta Brach-Czaina. „The Problems of Polish Feminism” *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny* 1-2 (1995): 363.

² As far as I know in the moment, the first article in Polish press about homosexual people was written by Barbara Pietkiewicz and appeared in *Polityka* weekly in spring of 1981.

third and fourth parts of this text are focussing on attitudes amongst lesbians and gay men towards gender norms in Polish society. My hypothesis is that they accepted rigid gender norms in the name of a greater social acceptance for the homosexuality. However, one must ask whether (homo)sexual liberation can sustain such a conservative deal? I suggest that as long as homosexuals do not realise that their emancipation is indeed interdependent from the freedom from gender norms – this must lead to even greater backlash and completely opposite results than intended.

POLISH GENDER

Since gender and sex are cultural products of historic time³ I should first describe what the specific of gender in Poland is. The most important factor influencing all aspects of social and cultural life is, with no doubt, a nineteenth century's trauma of in-dependence. I am ready to argue that Polish culture has never overcome the shock of losing a country-state status and 123 years of non-existence (Partition of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia took place between 1795-1918). Since that time, until the end of WW II, 'Poland' witnessed tens of uprisings, revolts and coups, of which only two were successful. This sad history of struggling towards national freedom and unclear future had to influence minds and bodies of Poles. This is the key-moment for the current perception of Polish sex, gender, and then sexuality. To understand better the 'private' one has to acknowledge the fact that there was no 'public' for over a century. Moreover, it was the most important 'century' for the creation of the modern European/Western notions of sex, gender, sexuality⁴. A process initiated during the Enlightenment flourished in the nineteenth century, when the term 'homosexuality' was coined, Freud 'revealed' unconsciousness, and 'modern science' has constituted itself in its final form. During all that extremely important events, Poland was combating with Oppressors. And it was that fight to have shaped the notion of 'Polishhoodness'. While in the West women and men were scrutinised against their usefulness for the capitalist system of mass production; in Poland it was done against their re-production of bodily capabilities. Women were to give birth to sons; and they were to fight and die for the Nation and Freedom. The significance of their bodies was measured according to life and death. This is the moment when 'Polish Mother' and 'Polish

³ Judith Butler. *Bodies That Matter* (London – New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁴ Michel Foucault. *History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1987-1998).

Family' enters the social scene to occupy hegemonial position until nowadays. Since terms were created purely in the 'private' sphere, once the 'public' appeared – together with 'political country' status in 1918 – these two categories appropriated and monopolized it. Although it was necessary to refill them with a new meaning, tailored for aims of the public, their private sense was not abandoned. Let's say, it was put into a stand-by mode, just to be soon re-activated, during WWII.

The most important features of gender roles imposed at the establishment moment of public are: primacy of nation/country and invisibility of the personal. These can be transformed in any way: from the individual submitted to the nation (until the 1945); through committing one's work for the benefits of a class (communist regime); to bringing forward 'higher ideas' or 'more important things to do' before individual interests (currently).

The communist period did not bring any crucial changes in the social and cultural organisation of society that would influence today's notion of gender, sex and sexuality. The major experiment was of course held under a slogan of 'equality' – the head idea of communism. It was about 'a recognition of the/some previous social practises as un-equal' (rather than discriminative) and reversing this into a new, communist order. However, the hidden idea behind was to find more 'hands to work' in the name of 'rebuilding the country', then 'building the communist country'. It succeeded in the famous slogan: "Women on tractors!", quite unfortunate one, considering how easily it was used by conservatives, to ridicule feminist movement by comparison to communism. This slogan reveals the true meaning of 'equality' under communism: it was about finding people to do more industrialised (men's) work, not about fair distribution of duties and goods. Domestic sphere remained intact; home as women's sphere, background and supplier, all on a shoulder of the woman, now with more responsibilities added. As it is today, there were 'more important things to do' in the country heading from crisis to crisis, then advancing social transformation. In fact, one could argue this 'malpractice of the system' – underestimating significance of cultural transformation as an indispensable for the new system implementation – was the basic reason underneath the later revolt, leading to overthrowing of communism. Summing up, it is worth pointing out that the communist period in Poland, when considering gender, was influential in a sense that its rather caricature call for gender quality served couple of years later, as an easy way to humiliate feminists by conservatives.

Another important moment in the process of creating today's gender norms is 1980 and the emergence of Solidarity, followed by the 1989 breakthrough. It helped to establish Catholic Church as an influential political actor. Although Catholicism always played an important role in the Polish culture, continuous secularisation during communism succeeded in diminishing its role. Although the Church played at many occasions a positive role in the process of destroying the communist regime, one has to notice its destructive power on the further liberalisation of society. It kept connections with powerful personalities of Solidarity, which formed a new government. The following years of new democratic rules just proved how well established the Church was and what a smart position it took.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Catholic Church declared its separation from the state; however, it is in-visibly present in the public/political sphere (e.g. St. Mary broche in the President Walesa's jacket). It manifests itself in linguistic discourses dominating the new reality. It was particularly evident in the public debate over abortion, when two camps: 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' became 'life defenders' and 'murderers of unborn/conceived children'; when 'sperm' no more 'fertilises' an 'egg cell' but 'two people create a human life' (not 'foetus'); when 'insemination in vitro' is 'juggling with life' and 'mass murder'⁵. These few examples show the way Church made its way into the public sphere, setting itself as the only ethical and moral authority and manipulating social sphere. It has been blocking any possibility of a constructive discussion over the 'controversial' values and practises, but first of all, over such principles as liberalism, dignity, freedom, individual/ human/ social/ group/ minority – rights. A very recent example is a European discussion on the preamble to European Constitution. One could expect a social democratic government to withhold from the support of God and Christian-related invocation. However, this was not the case of SLD party which, sinking in political swindles, decided to repair this way its image and credibility. Before moving on to the next problem in this article one more thing has to be noticed. The unspoken masculinity and almost automatic referral to gender issues as to women's issues. In all quoted examples of historic gender formation in Poland, 'gender' somehow meant 'women' or 'female'. It should not be surprising to the reader familiar with feminist or gender literature, as 'men' in patriarchal culture are always 'universal' and public (fighting for the nation and country), while women disappear in

⁵ In short, there are several eggs inseminated, of which just one is placed in woman's womb, thus the other cells ('children') are 'killed'.

domestic 'private' (giving birth to soldiers). In this aspect Polish patriarchalism is no different from the Western one. Rules organising both are based on similar principals, although each has gone its own way.

POLISH LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY

As I have written at the beginning of the article, there was virtually no homosexuality in Poland before 1980s. Of course, it existed, but neither was articulated nor named in public discourses. Or to paraphrase Józefa Hennelowa⁶ referring to one of her friends: every one knew 'they were (existed?)', but they were well-mannered not to show themselves off. A schizophrenic situation of not-being un-named was recognised as specific for the Polish culture not only indirectly in remarks as the one above, but also many academic researches show similar findings. Some of the very few writings about homosexuality in Poland are by Swiss professor German Ritz, who specialises in Slavonic literature. In the collection of his writings⁷, he exemplifies the ambiguity of the Polish attitude towards sexuality and the way the culture deals with it. Since the re-appropriation process of 'sodomite acts' as 'homosexual' category was happening during Polish non-existence and similar procedure could not occur, there had to be invited a 'third way'. The cultural suggestion was (and somewhat still is): "We don't ask – you don't say". In other words: keep-yourself-invisible-and-we-pretend-everything-is-ok⁸. One can notice a general rule of 'individual silence' described above in the context of gender. Now we can say, the most general and basic principle ruling on every level of social and cultural life in Poland is: to give up ones individual identity for the sake of community.

Then in 1990, when the first gay organisation was officially registered, the unspoken purpose (most probably not even realized by the organisers themselves) was to crack the silence around sexuality, call 'it' a name (!), and through this – bring homosexuality into existence. Since that time, taking a taboo subject into agenda and finding a proper language to talk about it,

⁶ Józefa Hennelowa is one of the columnists and vice-chief editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, catholic intelligentsia weekly.

⁷ German Ritz. *Nić w labiryncie pożądania* (Warszawa: WP, 2002).

⁸ Sorry Mr Clinton, you were not the first one to come up with this idea!

continues to be the major aim of any politically active⁹ queer person¹⁰. However, more specific issues addressed by the lesbian and gay community can be narrowed to a legal and social sets.

The first one is about a legal recognition of homosexual people as homosexual, not only as students, bankers, Poles, citizens... It is about an official validation of gay and lesbian identity as equally important with the ones mentioned above. Acknowledgement would happen through two central bills or law directives. One protecting against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation; the latter introducing same-sex partnership regulations. The importance of these is not just because we believe no one should be discriminated on whatever basis or be withheld from some basic rights (as the one to information about our partner's condition when in hospital). There is this additional one, call it 'a Polish specific'; to cross over imposed discourse of national priority. Naming sexual orientation in legal documents, as lesbians and gay men want to believe, will guarantee the recognition of a right of the individual to choose their primary identity, rather than being imposed with the national one first. In the common opinion between them, that is how the escape from 'unbearable Polishness'¹¹ in its conservatism of social norms would happen.

On the other hand, the social set is aimed at receiving acceptance from/in society, visibility in public discourses and finally, at tolerance. The two main sets are of course interdependent, although the belief in the creative power of law to change habitudes is in my opinion too exaggerated. From what was written above one can notice a broad ideology hidden behind lesbian and gay political activity: to be included into a society, but not to change it, so it could contain more diverse organisational schemes. The cycle starts with a plea for tolerance (identification), which should lead to visibility of lesbians and gays in social space (customisation) underpinning greater acceptance. Such an approval should then enable a legal recognition of same-sex partnerships (legalisation) heading for an anti-discrimination law (protection). The whole process may of course not be linear and so simple. Distinct phases may overlap with each other yet the focal components remain.

⁹ In a context of Poland 'politically active' must mean everyone who is ready not only to vote in elections, but to go in parades, manifestations, signs lists and petitions, discusses 'hot' issues with friends, takes side in debates... I do follow this understanding.

¹⁰ I understand 'queer' not as exclusive synonym of 'gay and lesbian', but in its queer theory take, as fluid and never ultimately defined term, describing rather every Other, then just homosexual one. Hence if I use

¹¹ Witold Gombrowicz. *Diaries v. 1-3* (Evanstone, IL: Northwestern UP, 1988).

There are six main ways¹² leading to accomplish the cycle. The first one is about showing how 'normal' we are, followed by the second one: rejecting every 'abnormal' expression of homosexuality. The other four contain organisation of gay cultural festivals, re-writing and re-discovering past/history, victimisation of ourselves and reference to authority persons. "Festivals" in most cases mean parade (not the pride one, but equality) some film screenings and conference/discussion panel. Rediscovering past is partially connected to the last strand and can be summarised in 'Michelangelo also was!' (gay, of course) words. However, calling upon authorities is also about finding a proper justification for us in respectful personalities and public personas. Hence it is popular to refer to e.g. singers who said in an interview that gay discrimination is inexcusable behaviour, etc... Finally the last method, victimisation, may be observed in the development of specific discourse presenting lesbians and gay men as underestimated, socially disabled, disregarded and not deserving such a bad treatment. Readers familiar with the formation of lesbian and gay liberation, mainly in USA, will inevitably notice some similarities with two first stages of that process. From the 1950s throughout the following decade the American civil society witnessed the emergence of first gay social movements. In the 1970s the second step was made through the gay liberation and lesbian feminism. And the baseline characteristic of Polish lesbian and gay political activity resembles those two. However, in the 1980s a new kind of social activism appeared, influenced by an AIDS epidemic, soon to develop into a queer activism; yet strategies of these two last phases can hardly be found in Poland. I do not want to insist Polish lesbians and gay men should follow the same pattern of development. But if we consider the western history as a consequent flux towards a change, one has to ask a question: Why did this process stop in Poland and is not evolving? My hypothetical answer lays in the gender constrains lesbians and gays adopted in the course of liberation.

POLISH HOMOSEXUAL GENDER¹³

Let me start with an obvious statement: as we know from the history of both lesbian and gay, and feminist movement, the interdependence between gender and sexuality was not an easy one. Both movements happened to reificate exactly the same oppressive attitudes towards

¹² I do not claim in this article, to recognise all of these means, nor to give their in-depth description. They follow random order and just serve as background description, hence some (otherwise unacceptable) generalisation are inevitable.

¹³ I would like to stress again that following description is about sexual minority politics of gender, hence I am not analysing mainstream discourses or practises and take some things for granted without further explanation.

themselves as the majority imposed on each separately. And even today both movements are so diverse, so many streams within them, that it is completely impossible to make both go along the same path. Anyway, the point is in a mutual recognition of each other: differences in oppression, fighting with it, means and methods of doing this. Only when a reciprocal acknowledgement happens, both communities will progress with their own aims. Otherwise, sooner or later, they must face a backlash and withhold their activity, as it is impossible to continue feminist politics without an account of sexuality and *vice versa*, to do homosexual activism without acknowledging influences of gender constrains onto sexuality. In Poland, lesbian and gay community, and to a lesser extent their organisations, have not done it yet. The three main reasons for that are: essentialism with regard of identity; deeply rooted patriarchalism of gay men and women; and finally the lack of understanding for the feminist claims, hence often counter-feminist attitudes. Moreover, I want to place another hypothesis concerning gay and lesbian relation to mainstream gender. I will argue that the homosexual community has sold, to put it in metaphorical terms, gender for sexuality. It decided to hold back the support for the gender reform in an exchange for the social acceptance of homosexuality. An immediate question is whether such a conservative deal can sustain any further development towards a modern liberal change? Is it possible to continue 'a sexual revolution' on the ground of an engendered power relation ruling contemporary societies? In a long-term perspective – certainly not. However, maybe it is doable to achieve some of the short-time planned goals concerning sexuality, and then refrain from current strategies? This could be suggestion drawn from present politics... Yet, my queer mind and soul dictate me it is absolutely impossible and unacceptable to carry on any kind of politics, long or short termed, in the name of exclusion and injustice done to anyone, who happens not to be in gender, sex or sexual mainstreaming categories. And to underline: not only within a majoritarian society, but also inside a minority group. Being The Other in society we must not allow to reproduce exclusion within our communities and stigmatise the Other of The Other.

First of all, lesbians and gays are essentialist in their view of identity and homosexuality *per se*. This very basic orientation is not only a limitation, but also dangerous trap. Essentialism is based on a belief that identification process is being done once and forever. Moreover, it is not only still, it is not even a process, but some kind of a stable 'thing'. One of the crucial moments in the constitution of stability would be coming out. But isn't it a process itself, proving one must

grow to recognise oneself as 'a homo' and then decide to publicly acknowledge a gay inner-self by receiving approval or rejection from the listener? Anyway, here the crucial fact is in the divisions a person makes, if s/he believes in the naturalness of identity. Essentialism forces us to choose and prioritise one identity as the most important one, subordinating other identifications. Hence we are gay people first, and then we may be women and men, or Americans or Poles, or whatever beings. The choice is hegemonic and forces a false belief that there is 'a universal gay identity' shared by all who feel the sexual desire towards same sex people. Being proven untrue by queer theorists, it seems to be particularly dangerous in disregard of gender. A forced displacement of gender by Polish lesbians and gay men as less important than sexuality, gives 'a go' for the patriarchal dis/em/powerment between members, as well for the larger scale. This kind of thinking produces choices, inevitable selections, convicts us of a need for bargaining in the liberation process. Essentialism stresses prioritisation, which is used by patriarchy to re-impose itself in 'to-gain-you-must-give-something-up' politics. In Poland it is a gender reform to be put aside the liberation struggle. Furthermore, it is often not only about postponing, but the impertinence of patriarchal thinking goes further in the homosexual community, turns it against the feminist recognition of gender discrimination and makes it often the counter-feminist. We can then say essentialism is laid as rudimental for all problems lesbians and gays come across (and produce themselves!) their struggle for social liberalisation. Moreover, it also produces more obstacles in relation to gender and allows sexism (as particular feature of patriarchy) to sneak and widespread in the community.

Provided essentialism is grounding, it is a deeply rooted patriarchy that causes most of the problems in relation to gender, amongst homosexuals. One feature is particularly visible in a creation of their community. But can we/one say this about invisibility? Because it is universalisation of 'the masculine' to a neutral 'we' and forcing 'female' into shadowy corners of non-existence, that runs lesbian and gay community in Poland as much as it is present in mainstream discourses. Gay men are predominantly male and in this respect are no different from straight men. Even though they are homosexual (primacy of sexual identity), they are males and as such cannot understand women (gender separation introduced), not even lesbians with whom they share sexuality factor (gendered distribution stronger than unity of sexual experience). Here the identity essentialism reproduces mainstream gender divisions, leading to 'a lesbo phobia' amongst gay men as a direct expression of misogyny. It has several manifestations, from scornful

conviction that all lesbians are butch and aggressive thugs, to a complete denial of the existence articulated in a well known 'joke': "What two women do in bed together? Nothing. Just watching telly". That means lesbians, as straight women, cannot be 'sexual beings', and since they are not 'sexual', two women together cannot be lesbians at all. Mainstream patriarchal denial of sexuality to women affects gay men in their essentialist notion of identity, and produces 'lack' or rather inhibits the belief in lesbian identity. Furthermore, there is also the universalisation process presenting gay male experience as 'the homosexual experience'. The language is a particularly good field to observe it. For example, all organisations are calling themselves LGBT, although none of them ever addressed issues concerning bisexual or trans people¹⁴. Also 'homosexuality' is used as synonymous to 'gay' (as noun or adjective) which is exclusively male in Polish (in contrast to English). It is also because the Polish language has different forms for each gender in singular, there are significantly many more male forms used (esp. in relation to a public sphere performance) and 'gender neutral' plurals are predominantly of male endings. This is not that different from the Western countries or rather the language usage is in many points similar to others who share some basic features, as the gender specification of words. Anyway, this feature amongst lesbian and gay community not only supports the lesbian invisibility but has also had some positive overtone. It has helped to establish lesbian separatism.

Being queer oriented I generally do not support the idea of any kind of separatism based on 'the distinctive identity', but I recognise some positive aims behind it. The will to organise 'women space' as 'a patriarchy-free zone', the need to empower those neglected participants. Nevertheless, even those lofty ideas cannot justify the injustice of exclusion. And it is not just only about those who sympathise with¹⁵, but especially those who have a full right to be included, like M/F transsexual women¹⁶. As the last example of the gay male dominance in the lesbian and gay communal space serves the club culture. Gay discos are places where gay boys with their fag hags have fun, while lesbian girls have to wait for, usually monthly, 'ladies nites'.

¹⁴ Small exception is Lambda Warszawa which made available its office to self-organised support group of transsexuals in 2003. Still, the group formed itself outside the organisation and was performing its activity as distinct and independent. Lambda served only as hub.

¹⁵ I remember to be straightforward rejected from the first meeting of lesbian feminist group in Lambda, just because I was man and gay. My comment that at that moment I considered myself much more queer and feminist and in tune with lesbian feminists than with gay men – was left ignored as 'ridiculous' with everlasting song 'men cannot understand women'.

¹⁶ See for example Joanna Mizielińska, who has written widely about the issue.

Finally, one must pay tribute to lesbian and gay organisations as vanguards of change. Yet, the situation with NGOs is complicated, as they obviously cannot be representative for everyone, although as elites, they impart the main directions of political activities. Civil activists from the main Polish organisations are rather familiar and supportive for feminism, often adopting suggested steps (like gender parity of board members or taking part in feminist manifestations) for gender equality. Though there is no deeper interest in gender politics shown clearly in, for example, the lack of support for ‘the equality bill’ and feminist efforts in promoting the importance of some legal regulations against gender discrimination – the fact even more surprising, when considered in a context of lesbian and gay own struggle for anti-discrimination set of laws.

POLISH STRAIGHT GAYS & LESBIANS

As for the last part, I would like to focus on how lesbian and gay community expresses its ‘normality’ and treats the ‘abnormal’. To do so, I just want to show a few pictures and translate some comments, bits from interviews etc., from a social campaign “Let Them See Us” (Niech Nas Zobacza), organised in spring/summer 2003¹⁷. This campaign was aimed at introducing positive images of homosexuals into the society. Although planned to be shown on outdoor billboards, the images circulated the society mostly in press, since some city councils banned them or the posters were destroyed/removed immediately after being posted. The aim of the campaign was achieved: it was the first time Poland witnessed a public discussion on homosexual people in the Polish society. The response was huge, moreover, the mainstream discourses after this campaign changed, became more neutral or positive. “For the first time, homosexuals were shown as ordinary people, not as paedophiles from a railway station or freaks from a gay parade”¹⁸ – society bought it. And believed it.

¹⁷ All citations and quotations are taken from different articles, all gathered under ‘PRESS’ or ‘PRESS RELEASE’ links on the official campaign’s website: <http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/> (all accessed 15.06.2006).

¹⁸ http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/strony/prasa/27.05.03_en.htm



When Daria was asked why she took part in the project, she replied: “For honesty. They [society] must see that lesbians are not butch and masculine women, but normal girls. (...) [Referring to both gays and lesbians:] Just regular, hand holding couples. Not immoral or pervy, nor victims. Not from gay parades, not cross-dressed in female clothes, not butch dykes, as people think. Just ordinary people like neighbour from the next door or a shop assistant in a corner shop. As everyone”¹⁹. It was about showing that “homosexual [in Polish: male form] is not a pervert, cross-dresser shown in the media during parades. A homosexual is first of all our doctor, baker, teacher, politician. Often husband or wife”²⁰. Robert Biedroń, the President of KPH stresses the importance of this action, because “the author of these portraits has showed us – gays and lesbians – in a non-controversial manner”²¹. “From a huge poster two young girls are looking at pedestrians. Attractive, smiling, sexy. Yet ordinary. Like every other [girls] we pass by in a street. Dressed in jeans and jackets, as their peers. They walk holding hands”²².

¹⁹ http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/strony/prasa/19.03.2003_a.htm

²⁰ <http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/strony/prasa/20.03.2003.htm>

²¹ http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/strony/prasa/22.03.2003_a.htm

²² <http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/strony/prasa/15.04.2003.htm>



So ‘normal’ means straight, and that is what we are supposed to want as homosexual people. The campaign was a seal on the envelop with a silent pact inside. Homosexuals gained some degree of tolerance and visibility, but had to promise to be as normal as possible. And it was gender in its most ‘common’ or ‘typical’ expression that was to secure the deal. But was it worth? Wasn’t the price too high? I think it was. We may not see the costs yet now, but I believe, following my queer mistresses and masters, that the injustice done on this particular occasion to anyone who does not fall within ‘normal’ category, or does not want to, must get rotten at some point and turn what appears to be a beautiful flower into a lethal poison of rigidity.

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